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ABSTRACT

Some of the assumptions, conditions, and parameters which deal with power structures and rural development are briefly specified in this paper. The definitions (conceptual and operational) for power, social power, authority, influence, power structure, development, and rural are discussed. The ideological orientation under which development activities are assumed, expected, required, or desired to be carried out is discussed as a 5-part typology. These typoligies include the Empirical-Rational, the Normative-Re-educative, the Influence-Manipulative model, the Power Coercive model, and the Conflict model. The scope, type, amount, and responsibility for development and the decision-making units which must be involved in development decisions are also specified. (NQ)

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POWER STRUCTURES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT[1]

by

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Introduction

This is my first attempt to prepare a "key" paper for a session of the Third World Congress of Rural Sociology. Many roles could be attempted in such a paper. One role could be that of attempting to deal with some of the conceptual problems and specifying some of the necessary conditions that might help enhance the probability for our session -- the papers and discussions that are to follow. I will attempt to make an attempt in that direction. I will make this attempt under the general headings: 1. Toward Some Definitions, 2. A Typology of the Processes of Development, 3. Specifying Decision Making Units, and 4. Conclusion.

Toward Some Definitions

The title of the session, and the paper assigned to me, is "Power Structures and Rural Development." It is difficult to think of any other title that would contain a higher density of concepts with varying and ambiguous meanings. Perhaps the place to start would be to attempt to state one set of definitions of the key concepts in this title to at least provide a common base for a point of departure for our discussion.

Power. It is assumed that "power" refers to social power. The author and his colleagues have spent considerable time and energy in conceptualizing and conducting research in the area of social power.[3] A review of the

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[1] Key paper for seminar session, Power Structures and Rural Development, Third World Congress of Rural Sociology, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 22-25, 1972.

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[3] For example see: Joe M. Bohlen, George M. Beal, Gerald E. Klonglan and John L. Tait, Community power structure. Rural Sociology Report No. 35, Iowa Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1964; Joe M. Bohlen, George M. Beal, Gerald E. Klonglan and John L. Tait, Community power actors. Rural Sociology Report No. 40, Iowa Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1965; Joe M. Bohlen, George M. Beal, Gerald E. Klonglan and John L. Tait, A comparative analysis of community power structures. Rural Sociology Report No. 50, Iowa Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1967.

writing of some of the classical writers[4] in the area of social power indicates varying conceptual and operational definitions of social power. Based on this review and an empirical research orientation, we have found the following concepts and definitions to have conceptual and empirical utility.

Social Power is defined as the capability to control the behavior of others. Social power is conceptualized as having two major sub-components, authority and influence.

Authority is defined as the capability to control the behavior of others as formally defined by members of a social system. Established authority resides in the status-role in the system not in the incumbent (individual) as such. Formal authority is most easily observed in formal bureaucratic structures with designated status-roles with superordinate and subordinate rankings. In its ideal type, the amount of authority would be constant for a given status-role, unless changed by the members of the social system. In the real world, the amount of power exercised in a given status-role will vary as a result of at least three factors. First, the authority component of power may interact with the influence component of power to produce a variation in the amount of total power exercised. Second, the incumbant in a status-role may not exercise the full measure of authoritative power due to imperfect knowledge of the authority given to him or unwillingness to exercise the full authority of the position. Third, the members of the social system may not have perfect knowledge of the authority invested in the status-role or be unwilling to force conformance to the formalized authority parameters of the position.

Influence is defined as that component of social power which is not formally designated in the authority component of status roles. It is based on the control over, or access to, resources relevant to a designated social action. Influence resides in the individual (not the formal status-role) based on his facilities and abilities. It may be based on such factors as wealth, specialized knowledge, reputation, reciprocal obligations, status, organizational ability outside the community contacts and

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[4] For example: Max Weber, The theory of social and economic organization. (Translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons). New York, New York, Oxford University Press, 1947; H. D. Lasswell and A. Kaplan, Power and Society; a framework for political inquiry. London, Routledge and K. Paul, 1952; J. R. P. Franch, Jr., A formal theory of social power. Psychological Review 63: 181-194, 1956; Talcott Parsons, A revised analytical approach to the theory of social stratification. In Reinhard Bendix and Seymour M. Lipset, eds., Class status and power. Pp. 92-128, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1953; Charles P. Loomis, Social systems. Princeton, New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1960; Robert Bierstedt, An analysis of social power. American Sociological Review 15: 730-738, 1950.

resources, and control of, or access to, such scarce resources as credit, employment, and communication.

Power structure is defined as a pattern of relationships among power actors which enables them to act in concert to affect the decision making process and behavior of other members of the social system.

Development. Development is an often used term. It is a term that is often used without definition. It is used to describe goals, means, programs and processes. It may be used to refer to a desired state of affairs such as modernization or industrialization for a nation state, a region, a community, or it may be used to refer to more specific phenomena, e.g., an industry, a school, a dam, or the acceptance of new chemical. As a suggestion I will define development as some existing or future state of affairs that is normatively valued by relevant definers as a preferable state of affairs to that state of affairs used as comparison.

Rural. Rural is another concept that has a wide variety of meanings and empirical references. In some cases when it is precisely defined, as in the case of the U.S. Census (basically as villages 2,500 or less and those living in the open country, including farmers) it is of little or no value when speaking of development. Rather consistently, rural is discussed in comparison with urban. Such factors as value orientation (e.g., gemeinschaft and gesellschaft), organizational complexity, population density, occupational roles and differentiation, function operations (e.g., extractive v.s. manufacturing, processing and professional services), etc. Rural development in less developed nations is often defined in terms of agriculture and agriculturally based villages. For our purpose, it may be advisable to speak of "rural development" as those development goals, programs and activities that have as their major focus the bringing about of a preferable state of affairs for those engaged in and closely related to the extractive industries. Thus, national and urban development which has direct or indirect implications for major rural development is not ruled out of the definition.

A Typology of the Processes of Development

To me, it seems logical to assume that the label of this section implies "The Role of Power Structures in Rural Development." How can one specify the role of power structures in diverse cultures and under varying development goals and means? Even within a given culture, for example, the United States, there are widely varying goals and means. It can be argued that the ideological and philosophical premises upon which strategies of development are based vary greatly from country to country, and within countries. Thus, it appears that a second major area of discussion could be to briefly present a conceptualization of the range of processes or strategies that apparently exist.

The presentation of normative or ideological typologies of the range of processes used to accomplish change (development) is difficult and frought with possible emotional connotations. A five part typology will be presented, with some subtypes, to attempt to explain what is meant by normative or

ideological orientations and provide a context within which the role of power structures can hopefully be more rationally discussed.[5]

1. There is a typology labeled Empirical-Rational which may be judged to be close to what some label pure participatory democracy. The Empirical-Rational approach is based on the assumption that all men are rational, and that man will follow his rational self interest and make rational decisions based on the information he possesses.

There are a number of possible sub-types and dimensions that should be specified within this typology.

At one extreme it may be conceived that man possesses the knowledge needed to make decisions and will interact with other men to the extent necessary to make decisions he desires to have made. It may be further conceived that there is no need for overt outside intervention or motivation. This has been labeled by some as "spontaneous" or "natural" social change and development. It involves no overt or directed external force to stimulate change.

Additional sub-types introduce the concept, "change agent," an actor or actors initiating action. The change agents most passive role is seen as facilitating the interaction process among "rational men." The role of the change agent may be seen as attempting to set up relatively unstructured social interaction situations which will facilitate communication among individuals, so they determine what knowledge they have, perhaps pool that knowledge, express their problems and concerns and, if motivated, determine goals and objectives and carry out actions that might be taken to alleviate these problems. In this case, the change agent does not provide content knowledge regarding problems. He may provide knowledge and skills regarding effective intercommunication and decision making.

A slightly more directive sub-type assumes the above, but also assumes that the change agent will attempt to increase the knowledge base by pulling out and integrating the knowledge possessed by the group involved, by facilitating a rational analysis process and perhaps himself informally providing information.

These sub-types are all judged to be within the empirical-rational typology.

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[5] This discussion is an elaboration and adaptation of Robert Chin and Kenneth D. Benne, General strategies for effective change in human systems, in Warren G. Bennis, Kenneth D. Benne and Robert Chin, eds., The planning of change, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1969.

2. The second general typology may be labeled the Normative-Re-educative. The following are some of the characteristics of t is typology:

Direct intervention by change agents based on some theory of change.
Emphasis on the involvement of the client system in working out changes desired.
The possibility is recognezed that the decisions regarding change may be worked more rationally if more adequate technical information is provided -- it usually involves an educational component.

However, the activities in this typology usually recognize that a major part of the problem may lie in values, attitudes and norms and the external and internal relationships of the client systems. It is assumed that re-educative activities must be carried out for problem clarification-solution, and changes of values, attitudes and norms is a pivotal concern.

Value normative issues are clarified openly, value conflicts are discussed and ameliorated in the open, through mutual interaction between the change agent and the client system -- manipulation and indoctrination is avoided.

3. The third typology may be labeled the Influence-Manipulative model. The following usually characterize this typology:

Predetermined definition of the problem, at least at a general level.
Predetermined solutions or alternative solutions.
Predetermined specification of technical information packages needed to be communicated.
Predetermined assumptions of existing values, attitudes and norms, and changes needed in these for problem definition and solution.
A strategy is developed for guiding or directing relevant actors or client systems through the decision making steps toward a predetermined solution or relatively equally acceptable set of alternative solutions.

4. The fourth typology may be labeled the Power Coercive model. The power coercive model may include the following characteristics:

It assumes coercive activities within generally accepted norms or the legal bounds of society.
It is dependent mainly or heavily on coercive tactics to influence the behavior of others.
It emphasizes sanctions that can be delivered if behaviors are not changed -- sanctions in the areas of the political, legal, economic, moral, etc.
It works within or attempts to bring about changes in the existing systems and subsystems. (It does not overtly attempt to destroy existing systems as is assumed under the conflict model. It is more dependent on confrontation than conflict and violence.)

To some, coercion is an offensive term. However, some examples of coercive power may bring clarity to the concept and indicate it is often used.

Through the political and/or legislative (and in some cases, judicial) process, laws are passed and determined to be constitutional. Legitimate coercive power is used, if needed, to implement or enforce the law, e.g., civil rights, school integration, pollution control and zoning. In more authoritarian and/or totalitarian countries, coercive power is a common form of power.

A more subtle type of coercive power is the "strings" attached to the availability of federal funds, i.e., funds are available only if certain changes are made or certain activities undertaken. Tax incentives for individuals and corporations is also a form of coercive power.

There are many other examples of coercive power: companies threatening to pull a plant out of town unless certain conditions are met; new industry "demanding" certain concessions to locate in a community; power structures withholding resources unless their conditions are met or exerting pressure on individuals and groups to behave in certain ways.

However, all coercive power does not come "from the top down." Rank and file people may organize to exert coercive power: for example, work slow-downs, strikes, boycotts, marches, sit-ins, "button holing" legislators. (In general, the Alinsky model of change embodies coercive power as its main change strategy.)

5. The fifth typology may be labeled the Conflict model. This typology may be characterized as follows:

In general, it does not choose to put pressure on the existing system or sub-systems to change.
Rather, it sets out rather overtly to destroy or replace the existing system or sub-systems.
Agressive behavior including violence is an accepted mode of operation. Revolution is one example of behavior within the conflict model. This violence may be directed at individuals, groups or physical facilities.

Presented above are five typologies of change. It is recognized that this is not the only way or necessarily the best typology of social change. However, it does show the variance in ideological orientations involved in social change. In the real world of attempting to bring about community development, probably a number of different typologies will be used, even within one social action program. The type, amount and role will probably vary greatly depending on the ideological orientations permeating the development activity.

Specifying Decision Making Units

Regardless of the range of acceptable means for change, there is another important consideration involved in specifying processes of development and the probable role of social power. An important fact, often overlooked, or not emphasized, is that almost all change is the result of decisions by human beings. (The fact that changes may be due to natural phenomena, wind,

rain, floods, earthquakes, etc. is recognized.) If we accept the proposition that almost all change, certainly social change, is the result of human decision making, where does it lead us? In my mind, it leads us down the path to another very important consideration. Namely, if we specify a development objective, we should also specify who is going to have to make decisions if we are to reach that objective. The obvious answer is that humans as individuals or two or more individuals in some type of interaction with each other are going to have to make the decisions. At more real world level, if we think of a range of development goals, we can easily begin to list many decision making units which may be crucial to reaching specified development goals: e.g., individuals, families, municipal councils, zoning commissions, corporation boards of directors, school boards, legislative bodies, administrators in government units, party officials, business entrepreneurs, labor unions, courts, judges, aggregates (public opinions), etc. I would argue that we must go through the analytical process of delineating the decision makers whose behavior must be changed or buttressed to accomplish specified development objectives. I would further argue that the development processes and strategies may differ measurably depending on what the specified decision making unit or units are, or what combination of decision making units are target audiences for changes in decision making. The initiation and responsibility for development and the scope of development may have great influence on the type, and role of social power. For example, one might expect a high degree of authoritative power and little influence power in a national program of development in a totalitarian country.

Conclusion

The intent of this brief paper was to specify some of the assumptions, conditions, parameters that are judged to be essential if we are to have a successful session. These include:

1. Specifying definitions (conceptual and operational) for the key concepts in the title of our session.

2. Specifying definitions (conceptual and operational) for the key concepts in the other papers and in our discussion.

3. Specifying the scope, type, amount and responsibility for development.

4. Specifying conceptual and operational goals of development in measurable terms.

5. Specifying decision making units which must (or should) be involved in development decisions.

6. Specifying the ideological orientation under which development activities are assumed, expected, required or desired to be carried out.